

BUILDING

Communities

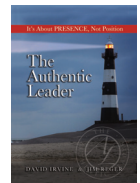
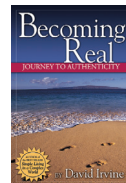
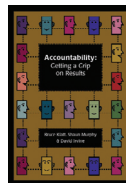
In The Midst Of Contradictions



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Winter Active Educational Forum and Trade Show
Wednesday, March 28th, 2007
Huntsville, Ontario
With David Irvine, The Leaders' Navigator
Best Selling Author, Consultant, and Leadership Architect**

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Newport Institute For Authentic Living And Leading
Phone: 1-866-621-7008
david@davidirvine.com
www.davidirvine.com
www.newportinstitute.com

David Irvine
DAVID IRVINE
the leader's navigator



Managing Contradictions

Managing contradictions and the power of authenticity

1. Organizational Schizophrenia – An Overview

2. Strategies For Managing Contradictions

Some examples of contradictory messages in organizations:

“Be effective and try new things,” but trying new things will likely interfere with our effectiveness.

“Be honest with me, tell me exactly what’s going on,” while implying, *“...but don’t ruin my day with bad news.”*

“I want you to take risks, but I don’t want you to fail,” knowing that risk taking, by definition, will increase your probability of failure.

“Be innovative, but stay within the rules...”

Or, the classic,

“We expect you to do more with less.”

Some examples of contradictory messages in organizations:

- Where do you see contradictory messages in your organization or community?

- What are the effects of these kinds of messages on people?

*Gregory Bateson's Double Bind Theory*¹

How To Make Someone Crazy

Gregory Bateson, a psychologist, anthropologist, sociologist, and cyberneticist, found, in his research, that there were six steps to make someone crazy:

Step 1: You need to have a relationship with someone who believes, very strongly, that his or her well being is dependent on you and to whom you are in a position of authority.

Step 2: The person in authority gives a “primary injunction,” an *order*, followed by a threat.

For example, “I want you to think for yourself; I want you to be independent. To do this, I do not want you to take orders from anyone else.” Then follow this order up with a threat of some kind of punishment.

Step 3: You give a “secondary injunction” that contradicts the first order, again under the threat of punishment.

For example, you punish a child for being disobedient while they are trying to think and act independently.

This is what Bateson called a “double bind.” Either choice will lead to punishment. You are damned if you do; you are damned if you don’t.

Step 4: Make the contradiction between your primary injunction and your secondary injunction completely undiscussable, and enforce this undiscussability with another threat of punishment.

Step 5: Pretend that everything is discussable.

Step 6: Create a condition in which the person receiving the injunctions and the contradictions cannot leave the system - that they cannot exit.

¹ Adapted from Fred Kofman, “Conscious Business” article, 2002

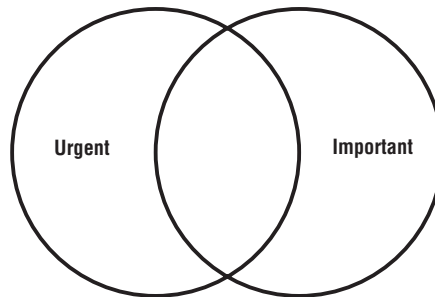
Keeping Yourself Centered

Strategies For Keeping Yourself Centered And Your Well-Being Strong In The Midst Of Contradictions:

1. Know where the fire exits are.

Take 100% accountability for your life. Remember that the most important thing in any human life is ownership for that life, the freedom and power to choose one's own response in any circumstance. Know that you are never so dependent on a system, a boss, or a job, that exiting the system is always available *as a last resort*.

2. Be very clear about your core values and the principles you stand for.



3. Remember that most people have good will and honourable intentions, and that very few people ever set out in the morning with an agenda to make you crazy.

4. Make the undiscussable discussable. Initiate the conversation in a respectful, accountable way.

Take 100% accountability for your confusion, and discuss your confusion in a respectful way (both to yourself and others).

For example, if your boss says, "...we have to reduce your budget. I need you to cut some expenses,' and at the same time, says, 'and by the way, due to mounting pressure we need to have 20% more output to satisfy growing demand.'" And you're thinking, 'wait a minute. You're asking me to produce 20% more and at the same time you're telling me we have 20% less resource? This doesn't make any sense.' That is an honest contradiction. It looks like a dilemma. The key is can you talk about it? Can you discuss this with your boss, or do you have to swallow it and "do your best"? The first thing is to talk to your boss in a respectful way: 'I'm having a little trouble understanding what you're saying. I don't want to bother you but I'd really appreciate having some of your time so we can clarify your expectations and make sure I do what you want me to do.'

5. Negotiate for reasonable expectations and promises, and practice impeccable integrity.

6. Take 100% accountability for your well-being and your contribution to your organization, and remember: Always be open to discuss the undiscussable!

A question for reflection:

- How can you apply these strategies?